

THE CAILLEACH IN PLACE-NAMES AND PLACE-LORE

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The principal aim of this article is to refine our understanding of the Gaelic place-name element *cailleach*. This will be done primarily through analysis of a cluster of *cailleach*-names and associated place-lore from one area of the island of Muile/Mull in the Inner Hebrides.¹ The main geographical area of focus is small but its namescape is dynamic and the analysis has implications for our understanding of this place-name element furth of the island and, indeed, furth of Scotland. The evidence lies in a range of published and unpublished textual and oral sources; in place-names, place-lore, linguistics and song. It will be argued that, when considered together, these sources provide evidence of a dynamic namescape which has been shaped by its associated place-lore and which has, in turn, fed the creative imaginations of local place-name users. The article aims to demonstrate that, while societal and linguistic change in this area of north-west Muile/Mull are factors behind this dynamism, a more significant factor is the human desire to perpetually imagine and reimagine our environments; to name and rename our surroundings. As Bender (2006, 303) writes, in a passage quoted by Künzler in the introduction to this publication: '[t]he same place at the same moment will be experienced differently by different people; the same place, at different moments, will be experienced differently by the same person; the same person may even, at a given moment, hold conflicting feelings about a place'. Bonnett (2015, 5) has described our 'yearning to radically rediscover the landscape around us', adding that 'the need for re-enchantment is something we all share'. It will be argued that the namescape of north-west Muile/Mull is a microcosm of dynamism in language and lore. The article aims to refine our understanding of place-naming processes and proposes future methodologies in place-name studies with attention to place-lore. The article adds a collection of published and

1. Dual-naming, using the structure Gaelic form/current anglicised mapped form, where the latter exists, is used for all place-names within the modern local-authority areas of Argyll & Bute and Highland cited in this article. Personal names are presented as Gaelic form (English form), where appropriate. I am grateful to Dr Sarah Künzler, Dr Simon Taylor and the two anonymous reviewers for comments on this article in development. Any shortcomings are my own.

unpublished lore from Muile/Mull to the existing corpus of lore associated with the Gaelic otherworld figure hereafter referred to as The Cailleach.² The article argues that this collection of lore provides us with examples of forms and functions of The Cailleach not discussed in recent studies of this otherworld figure. Furthermore, the analysis which follows has implications for our understanding of other place-name elements, including *G coileach*, *G achlais* and *G dròbh*, var. *drògh*.

Before exploring the dynamism of this namescape in north-west Muile/Mull, it is useful to engage with the etymology of *G cailleach* and current understanding of the term as a place-name element. Before analysing its Old Gaelic (OG) root, it is worth noting that in modern Scottish Gaelic the noun *cailleach* is primarily defined as ‘an old woman’ (*MacEachainn* s.v. *cailleach*). This is reflected in the definition of Eng. *cailleach* /'kəl(j)əx/ ‘an old (Highland) woman, a crone’, which is a borrowing of *G cailleach* (OED s.v. *cailleach*, n.). However, in modern Scottish Gaelic, the noun has a wide range of known applications beyond this primary definition, as can be seen in the following dictionary entries:

LearnGaelic: ‘old lady, old woman; old biddy, hag; (with def. art.) her indoors, the wife, the old lady; (with def. art.) landlady; period from 12–18 April; seat made of turf-covered stone coping (at the end of a shieling bed)’.

Dwelly: ‘woman, single woman, old woman; old wife; woman without offspring; nun; carlin; supernatural or malign influence dwelling in dark caves, woods and corries; coward, spiritless, heartless man; the last handful of standing corn on a farm; circular wisp on the top of a corn-stack; smoke cowl’.

We should therefore expect the place-name element *cailleach* to have been applied in various senses, literal and figurative, and this is evident in definitions of the element published by leading Scottish place-name scholars to date. Watson defines it as ‘nun; river hag’ (*CPNS*, 140, 267, 302, 427); Taylor (2005, 15) defines it as ‘old woman; rock’. Watson’s ‘river hag’ is one iteration of the otherworld figure of The Cailleach and *Dwelly* also alludes to the figure in the

2. An initial capital is employed in the definite article in the proper noun The Cailleach here but it is uncapitalised in other commentaries, e.g. Ó Cruaíoch 2003.

definition ‘supernatural or malign influence’. It is noteworthy that the respective definitions of Watson, Dwelly and Taylor link the figure to different natural features: rivers (Watson); caves, woods and corries (Dwelly); rocks (Taylor). This article argues that this variance is related to variance in forms and functions of the otherworld figure known in lore.

For context, The Cailleach appears in ‘a multiplicity of forms and functions’ which are difficult to distinguish and whose historical and functional relationship to each other is still largely obscure (Ó Cruailaoich 2003, 83). In his seminal study of this otherworld figure, Ó Cruailaoich (2003, 83) identifies these forms and functions as follows:

- A version of traditions of a mother-goddess emanating from the worlds of Indo-European and even old European cosmology
- A representative figure of the Divine Hag of the Celtic and early Irish worlds who has close connections with the sovereignty queen tradition
- A version of a supernatural female wilderness figure, peripheral to – and usually inimical to – the human world

The figure is thus ‘a product of the complex amalgamation of cosmological, religious and literary ideas and images that changes and develops through time’ (Ó Cruailaoich 2003, 81).

This can be seen in Scottish iterations and name-forms of The Cailleach. In folklore studies on the figure, attention has been drawn to the relationship between the figure’s complex origins and the complexity manifest in the figure’s known localised forms. MacAonghuis (2012) refers to various localised name-forms within a Gaelic-language context in Scotland; for example, she is Cailleach Beinn a’ Bhric to some in Loch Abar/Lochaber (see also *MacPherson*) and Cailleach Mhòr Chlibhric to some in Cataibh/Sutherland (see also Campbell 1860–62, 46). In Muile/Mull and in the wider area of Earra-Ghàidheal, the figure is generally known as A’ Chailleach Bheur (TAD 2743; Stòrlann; Campbell 1915). As Campbell (1915) explains, this name-form contains the Gaelic adjective *beur* as its final element. Campbell translates *beur* as ‘sharp-witted’ in this context but also acknowledges applications as ‘shrill, sharp, cutting’. Indeed, the range of positive and negative denotations of *beur* is indicative, and perhaps symptomatic, of the complex origins of the otherworld figure it describes in the name-form A’ Chailleach Bheur (see *Dwelly* s.v. *beur*); it is reminiscent of the variance we have already seen in applications of the

noun and place-name element *cailleach*. To emphasise this point, without diverging too far from the identified aims of this article, A' Chailleach Bheur is just one of a number of variant name-forms used to refer to this otherworld figure across Goidelic culture,³ many of which feature qualifiers closely comparable to G *beur*. Ó Cruailaich (2003, 88) identifies the following: Cailleach Bhéarra; Cailleach Bheur; Cailleach Bheurr; Cailleach Bheurrach; Cailleach Beartha; Cailleach Bheathrach. Within a Scottish context, Campbell (1915, 413) draws attention to other variants of the name which do not include the element *cailleach*: 'Beura' and the lenited form 'Bheura'. We can compare Campbell's name-forms to the likes of Berrey Dhone, who is identified as a Manx version of The Cailleach by Broderick (1984). In some places in Scotland, the figure is 'spoken of in the plural number, as staying in lochs and among rushes' (Campbell 1915, 413). It will be noted that the majority of the name-forms discussed above, including A' Chailleach Bheur, are suggestive, in name, of 'Caillech Bérré Buí' of the much-discussed ninth-century Old Gaelic poem known within an English-language context as 'The Lament of the Old Woman of Beare': a poem to which this article will return.⁴ However, as Ó Cruailaich (2003, 89; also 1988, 162) cogently argues, these Scottish versions need not be seen as derivatives of the character of the poem. The variant forms make it difficult to identify an original name-form and this is not the aim of this article; however, the implication of these variant forms is clearly of phonetic interpretation and reinterpretation across time.

Returning to the etymology of the term *cailleach* which is present in the name-form A' Chailleach Bheur, MacAonghuis's challenging of the received etymology of the term – as deriving from Latin *pallium* 'veil' (Ní Dhonnchadha 1994; eDIL s.v. *caillech*) – has added another layer of complexity to the debate as to The Cailleach's origins (MacAonghuis 2012). MacAonghuis (2012) draws attention to the frequent references in Scottish lore to the loud wailing of versions of The Cailleach figure and proposes an alternative derivation from the root **kal-*, which is cognate to the root of the English verb *call* and Latin *calo* 'to call together, summon, convoke'. The wailing motif might, instead, be said to have developed through conflation of The Cailleach with other figures in Gaelic tradition, perhaps, in some cases, specifically the *ban-sithe*: the supernatural

3. Goidelic culture is used here to refer to the shared culture of speakers of the Goidelic languages, i.e. Irish, Manx and (Scottish) Gaelic.

4. For editions of the poem, see Murphy 1953 and Ó hAodha 1989.

death-messenger whose name is anglicised as *banshee*.⁵ However, MacAonghuis's proposal that G *cailleach* derives from the root **kal-* is an interesting one within the context of place-names, particularly ones referring to water. It will be proposed below that some place-names containing G *cailleach* may actually derive from G *coileach* 'a cockerel; male bird of any species' (LearnGaelic s.v. *coileach*). This term is derived from OG *cailech* 'a cock; the male of various birds' (eDIL s.v. 2 *cailech*). The similarity to OG *caillech*, the term from which G *cailleach* derives, is notable. While there is clear distinction in realisation of G *coileach* [kʲɪ̌əx] and G *cailleach* [kaɫəx] in the modern Gaelic dialect of north-west Muile/Mull (SGDS §§141, 220, point 83), variance as regards articulation of the vowel in the first syllables of these terms and palatalisation of intervocalic slender *l* and *ll* elsewhere in modern Scottish Gaelic dialects (SGDS §§141, 220) means that G *coileach* and G *cailleach* have been and are susceptible to conflation. Indeed, this conflation can be seen in *cailleach-oidhche* becoming the standard term in modern Gaelic for an owl (LearnGaelic s.v. *owl*); *coileach-oidhche* is attested historically (eDIL s.v. 2 *caileach*).

Evidence for conflation of G *coileach* and G *cailleach* is relevant to place-name studies and to this article because G *coileach* has water-related, figurative applications which have been proposed in some Scottish place-names. The phrase *coileach srutha* means 'eddies of a stream' (LearnGaelic); *tha coileach air na tuinn* means 'there is foam breaking at the top of the waves' (LearnGaelic); and the diminutive G *coileachan* is 'a small cockerel; rivulet; tide rapids, strong tide currents' (LearnGaelic). Within a place-name context, Watson (1904, 183) proposes that *coileach* 'is applied to the crests of broken water' and translates Gleann Choilich and Abhainn Choilich in Kintail as 'Glen and river of the rapid'.

It is worth unpacking this figurative use of G *coileach*. Watson (1904, 183) seems to understand its figurative application as visual in relation to the Kintail place-names above and the same visual application seems to be evident in the phrase *tha coileach air na tuinn* 'there is foam breaking at the top of the waves'. Perhaps this is to be understood as comparison of the crests of waves to cockerels' combs. There is some comparative place-name evidence to support visual figurative application. Firstly, the English term *cock* in the place-name Cock of Arran (NR958521) applies to a 'large detached block of sandstone' on

5. For discussion of the articulation of The Cailleach and the *ban-sithe*, or *bean sí* as the figure is referred to within an Irish context, see Ó Cruaíaoich (2003, 52–54).

the northern shore of the island of Arran and it is so called, according to the lore recorded in OSNB (BTE OS1/6/3/16/1), because from the sea it ‘presented the appearance of a cock in the act of crowing’.⁶ No such lore is provided in the OSNB entries for the hill-names An Coileach in An t-Eilean Sgitheanach/Skye (NG525305) and An Coileach in Na Hearadh/Harris (NG086925) but it seems likely that the figurative application of *G coileach* in these names is also visual; in other words, these topographical features resemble the appearance of a cockerel, as the ‘crests of broken water’ described by Watson do.

However, we should note that *G coileach* is derived from the root **kal-* which, as we have seen, is cognate to the root of the English verb *call* and Latin *calo*. As Macbain points out, *G coileach* literally means ‘the caller’ (*Macbain s.v. coileach*). It is worth considering figurative applications in an aural sense: to places associated with loud noise. This aural sense is perhaps unlikely in hill-names but it is easy to imagine this aural sense lying behind *coileach*-names applied to places characterised by eddies, foaming waves, tide rapids, strong tide currents and broken water. When this is considered alongside evidence for conflation of *G coileach* and *G cailleach*, we might raise the possibility at this stage that some hydronyms containing *G coileach* may have been reanalysed and understood to contain *G cailleach*. This article will investigate the potential for conflation of these terms in the namescape of north-west Muile/Mull and comparable place-names elsewhere.

To return briefly to the etymology of *G cailleach* and MacAonghuis’s challenging of the received etymology of the term, the linguistic analysis presented above, when considered alongside the wailing motif in Scottish localisations of The Cailleach to which MacAonghuis draws attention, makes it unwise to rule out conflation of *G coileach* and *G cailleach* in some name-forms relating to wailing supernatural figures. That said, the chronological depth of The Cailleach figure across Goidelic culture and her varied forms and functions make development across the board from OG *cailech* to *G cailleach*, as opposed to *G cailech* to *G cailleach*, unlikely.

The implication of the linguistic evidence presented above for conflation of *G coileach* and *G cailleach* in place-names, as well as identified variance in localised forms, functions and name-forms of The Cailleach, is that attention to dialect and associated place-lore is critical in analysis of namescapes in which

6. The OSNB entry adds: ‘Some idle or malicious persons have since broken off the head, which now lies on the ground beside the decapitated body’.

G cailleach or *G coileach* are identified. It will be argued below that employing this methodology in critical analysis of just one namescape covering a relatively small geographical area can refine our understanding of *G cailleach* and *G coileach* as place-name elements within and outwith the study area, as well as increase our understanding of place-naming processes.

The study area is referred to hereafter as Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point. Caliach Point is the name recorded on the modern OS Explorer map (2015). This is an anglicisation of the underlying Gaelic name Rubha na Caillich which is recorded as *Row na Kaillich* in 1654 (Blaeu (Pont) Mula); *Row na Killich* in 1750 (Dorret); and is still used locally within a Gaelic milieu. The earliest known anglicised form is *Callich Pt.* [Point] which is recorded in 1801 (Langlands).⁷ The coastal landscape of the point is striking, with cliffs rising steeply to over 70m above sea-level. The point is exposed to the north and west. The nearest landmass to the north is the island of Rùm/Rum which is around twenty-three miles distant; the island of Colla/Coll lies around seven miles to the west. The strong currents and tides around the point are renowned. The geographical situation of Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point is aptly described by Campbell (1895, 65):



Fig. 1 Looking north-west across Port na Caillich towards Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point. Photograph: Alasdair C. Whyte

7. See Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point in the Appendix below for the known historical forms in full.

CAILLEACH POINT, OR THE OLD WIFE'S HEADLAND,⁸

Is one of the stormiest and most dangerous headlands on the west coast of Scotland. From base to top it is rocky, and for a considerable distance on each side. It faces the Island of Coll, and commands a view of the Point of Ardnamurchan, from which it is distant about seven or eight miles. At its base there is a strong tidal channel which has never been known to be dry at the lowest ebb tide.

Campbell's published lore about this place has been influential in local histories. Passages of it are found verbatim in MacLean (1923, 171). Other key sources for lore about Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point are the Gaelic-language and English-language pieces on A' Chailleach Bheur published by Catriona Nic-'Ille-Bhàin Ghrannnd (Katherine Whyte Grant) (G.[Grant] 1911; Grant 1925).⁹ Before turning attention to the place-names and lore associated with The Cailleach in these secondary sources, it is useful to look initially at the local namescape as it is presented in OS sources. A connection with The Cailleach is evident in four place-names:

- Caliach
- Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point¹⁰
- Port na Caillich
- Allt na Caillich

On the 2015 OS Explorer map, Caliach applies to the modern farm at NM355536. In OSNB and on the 6 inch 1st and 2nd edn OS maps, Caliach applied to the large, ruined pre-Clearance settlement in this area at NM356532. Similar forms of this toponym can be traced as far back as and including 1494 when it is recorded in *RMS* (ii no. 2329) as *Calzoch*.¹¹ The *z* in this form represents the Scots letter yogh (ȝ) and the phoneme /ʃ/ which, as we have seen, is recorded in G *cailleach* in the modern dialect of north-west Muile/Mull ([kaʃəx]: *SGDS* §§141, 220, point

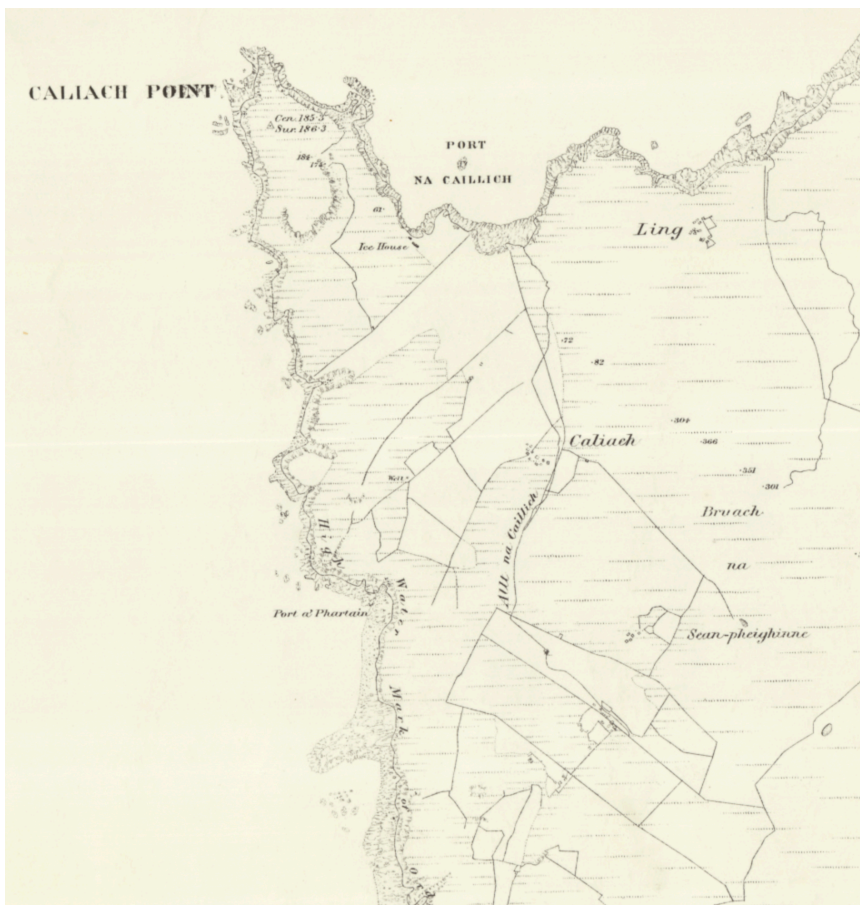
8. These alternative forms of the headname are discussed in the entry for Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point in the Appendix below.

9. In *Aig Tigh na Beinne* (1911), the author presents her name as K. W. G. on the title page (p. 1) and as Catriona Nic-'Ille-Bhàin Ghrannnd in her foreword (p. 4). The author is hereafter referred to as 'Grant', in relation to both publications, for clarity. Grant (1911) refers to the otherworld figure as 'Cailleach Bheur'.

10. Mapped as Caliach Point, as discussed above.

11. Historical forms are presented in full under the headname Caliach in the Appendix below.

83). There is one noticeably different form among these historical forms, *pencalich*, which is recorded in 1509 (NRS E38/339). On the face of it, this form could provide evidence for an underlying name containing G *peighinn* ‘a pennyland’¹² as its generic but there are no other known forms of this settlement-name containing *peighinn*. This evidence suggests that the prefix *pen-* was simply added to the name for the purposes of this particular source.



Map 1 The Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point area on the OS 6 Inch 1st Edition map (Sheet 83). Reproduced with the permission of National Library of Scotland
<<https://maps.nls.uk/os/6inch/>>.

12. A pennyland is a unit of land-assessment based on the penny. It relates to a measure of the value or extent of land, in other words the land's agricultural capability.



Fig. 2 Looking WSW towards Port na Caillich and the buildings of the modern farm of Caliach at the head of Port na Caillich. Photograph: Alasdair C. Whyte

Evidence to support this proposal lies in the form of the settlement-name that follows *pen-calich* in the source: *penlag*. This settlement-name is also typically recorded elsewhere without the *pen-*. It is *Lag* in 1496 (*RMS* ii no. 2329), *Lag* on the modern map (NM361537) and it is known locally as *Lag*. To summarise, the sources provide us with evidence of a place-name applied to a settlement traceable to the late medieval period which was then transferred to a modern farm in the post-Clearance period. The name is an anglicised form of G *cailleach* and it is always recorded without the definite article.

The specific of each of the other three aforementioned place-names in the vicinity of Caliach, however – Allt na Caillich, Port na Caillich and Rubha na Caillich – is G *cailleach*, in the genitive form *caillich*, preceded by the Gaelic definite article *an*, in the feminine genitive form *na*. The historical forms of these place-names, which are presented in full in the Appendix below, indicate that they contain the following generics respectively: G *allt* ‘a burn, a stream’; G *port* ‘a port, a harbour, a landing-place’; and G *rubha* ‘a point, a promontory, a headland’.

Engagement with local place-lore, specifically Campbell (1895, 66) and MacLean (1923, 171), allows us to add an unmapped Gaelic place-name of similar morphological structure to this group of *cailleach*-names: Achlais na Caillich. This name’s generic is G *achlais* ‘an armpit’. Campbell (1895, 66) describes the referent of the place-name as ‘an indentation...where salmon nets are set...characterised as not the armpit of a smooth woman (*Achlais na mnà mìnne*)’. Here, and elsewhere in this published lore, there is evidence that

Campbell is translating from a Gaelic informant. In the passage quoted above, ‘the armpit of a smooth woman’ is a direct translation of the Gaelic phrase he italicises in brackets. This small indentation of the sea lies around 250m south-east of the tip of Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point and is defined by another small arm of land projecting northwards whose tip is at NM351553. *G achlais* is a relatively common element in Scottish place-names and it is understood to typically refer to ‘a shallow, oxter-shaped hollow’ (Taylor 2015, 76). However, in Achlais na Caillich, we have an example of a place-name referring to a coastal feature. The precise referent is very likely to be the angle or bend in the coastal landscape here. OG *ochsal* (f), from which *achlais* derives, is defined as ‘an armpit; a wing’ and was used ‘of an angle, bend or sharp curvature in general’ (eDIL s.v. *ochsal*).

As regards the specifics found in Achlais na Caillich, Allt na Caillich, Port na Caillich and Rubha na Caillich, there is strong evidence to suggest that they were understood by at least some of the place-name users as an existing name which will be presented here as *A’ Chailleach. The name is presented in this reconstructed form based on the four place-names above. Its etymology will be discussed in full below. It will be argued below that this proposed existing name has had a number of different referents within a Gaelic milieu across time and that place-lore is key in their identification. These referents are:

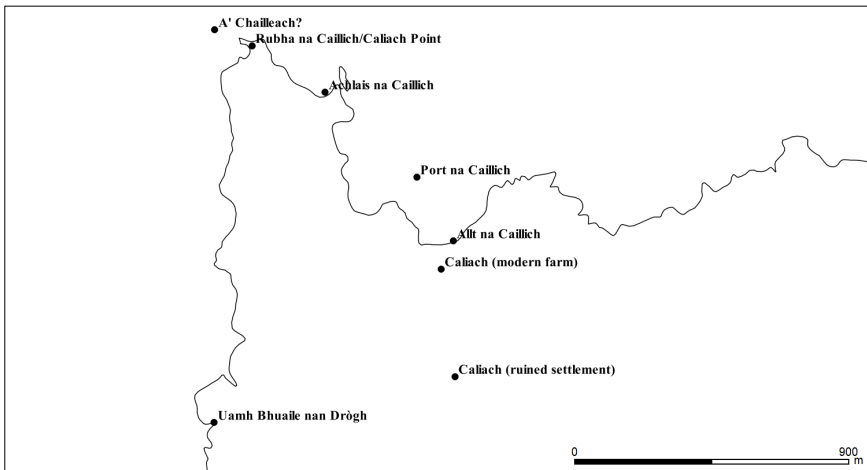


Fig. 3 Looking SE towards Achlais na Caillich from the sea off Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point. The indentation described by Campbell is slightly right of centre. Photograph: Alasdair C. Whyte

1. The pre-Clearance township¹³ known and recorded within a Scots and English milieu as Caliach
2. The headland at the tip of which Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point lies
3. The crag of Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point
4. A dangerous thalassographical¹⁴ feature off Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point

The identification of these four referents, in particular the last, has significant implications for:

- Our understanding of G *cailleach* and G *coileach* – and related terms – as place-name elements
- Our understanding of factors contributing to dynamism in place-names in Scotland and beyond
- Future methodologies in place-name studies involving place-lore



Map 2 Place-names identified as being associated with The Cailleach in the Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point area. The referent of the proposed existing name *A' Chailleach is discussed below, as is Uamh Bhuaile nan Drògh. Map: Alasdair C. Whyte

13. Township is used here in the Scottish Standard English sense of 'a farm held in joint tenancy', i.e. including the dwellings and the associated land (see OED s.v. *township*, n., 6.).

14. From Greek *θάλασσα* 'sea' and *θαλάσσιος* 'marine'; for use of this English adjective, see OED s.v. *thalassography*, n.

As regards the first of the four referents, as has been demonstrated above, the settlement-name Caliach has had two referents across time: the pre-Clearance township and the modern farm. There is no known evidence of *A' Chailleach having been applied to this settlement but each of the known forms of the settlement-name have been recorded in a non-Gaelic milieu and/or a non-Gaelic context and it is highly likely that *A' Chailleach, with the definite article, was used of the settlement within a Gaelic milieu. It is very likely that, to some place-name users, Achlais na Caillich, Allt na Caillich, Port na Caillich and Rubha na Caillich were understood to pertain to the township of *A' Chailleach; in other words, Port na Caillich is very likely to have been understood as the port, harbour or landing-place associated with the township of *A' Chailleach.

The evidence of place-lore in textual and oral sources is key to our identification of the application of *A' Chailleach to the second and third referents: the headland at the tip of which Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point lies and to the crag of Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point. Campbell (1895, 66–7) explains the place-name Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point thus:

the story which is said to have given its name to the Headland, is, that an old woman was gathering shell-fish in the neighbourhood when the tide began to make, and the woman finding no other means of escape made a last effort by climbing up the rocks. When at the top, and almost out of danger, she said 'I am safe now, in spite of God and men' (*Tha mi tearuinte nis ge b' oil le Dia 's le daoine*). She was converted into a stone forming part of the rock distinctly to be seen from the highest point of *Cailleach*. It is said that the figure of the old woman was very distinctly to be seen at first, and hence the name of the Headland, but time has done its own work and the figure is not now so unmistakable. Even the origin of the name is only known to those who are natives of the neighbourhood. (See also MacLean 1923, 171)

Grant (1925, 8) presents the following place-lore: 'There she [‘The Cailleach’] sits among the rocks, ever gazing seaward’. More recently, MacQuarrie (1982, 9) presents the following lore under the headname Caliach Point: ‘The rock formation had the appearance of a female head before the nose part broke away’. There is lore held in my own family that part of the rock face at the point of the headland of Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point resembles an old woman (pers. comm. Reay Whyte). The petrification motif presented in the lore of

Campbell above and, perhaps, alluded to by Grant will be analysed within the context of forms and functions of the otherworld figure of The Cailleach in other lore below. As regards the proposed existing name *A' Chailleach, though, this body of lore allows us to identify two other referents: the headland and the crag.

However, there is evidence in historical and current sources for *A' Chailleach having a fourth referent: the turbulent sea off the tip of Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point. Among this body of evidence is current understanding of the name by local seaman Cailean Moireasdan (Colin Morrison) (pers. comm.): 'it [the name Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point] was likely because it's a hard, thrawn kind of place to pass with a boat at times'. There is lore in my own family of boats being spun around and off course in the waters off the point (pers. comm. Reay Whyte). The turbulent waters and currents are clearly visible from the cliff-tops of Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point, as can be seen in Fig. 4. The dangerous waters are acknowledged in several published sources, including the place-lore published by Campbell, as we have seen (1895, 66): 'The tides which sweep past this point render it more difficult and dangerous to get past in a head wind than even the Point of Ardnamurchan, of which the dangerous character is well known'.

Moreover, there is direct evidence for the proposed existing name referring to the dangerous waters off Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point in local song: an underestimated and under-used source in Scottish place-name studies.¹⁵ The song is understood to have been composed by the local song-maker Mairghread nighean Lachainn on the death, in 1750, of Sir Eachann MacIllEathain (Sir Hector Maclean), chief of Dubh-Àird/Duart in Muile/Mull.¹⁶ The earliest known source for the song is contemporary with it: the manuscript [MS] collection of Dr Hector Maclean of Grùilinn/Gruline in Muile/Mull, most of which was likely composed before 1768 (see Ó Baoill 2009, 111). The relevant couplet in the song as it appears in this source is: 'Ri nach robh iad 'Sa Chailich / Fudh Chaiream an

15. For one important study of how song can contribute to place-name studies within a Scottish context, specifically evidence from the Gaelic ballads, 'Fian-lore', see Meek (1998).

16. For an edition and translation of the song, under the title 'Do Shir Eachann, Mac Gilleathain' ('To Sir Eachann Maclean'), see Ó Baoill (2009, 102–09).

lionaich' ('Lord, that they [the Lowlanders] were in *A' Chailleach under the tumult of the flood-tide') (HM, 87; Ó Baoill 2009, 217).¹⁷



Fig. 4 Turbulent waters, on a calm spring day, off the coast of Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point. Photograph: Alasdair C. Whyte

It is worth unpacking this metaphor before analysing the place-name and its precise referent. Firstly, it is noteworthy that the flood/ebb-tide metaphor is central to the aforementioned ninth-century poem 'The Lament of the Old Woman of Beare'. The poem's opening stanza is:

Aithbe damsa bés mara;
sentu fom-dera croan;
toirsi oca ce do-gneó,
sona do-táet a loan.

('Ebb-tide to me as to the sea; old age causes me to be fallow;
although I may grieve thereat, it comes to its food joyfully.')

¹⁸

The metaphor is picked up again in subsequent stanzas:

Céin-mair ailén mara máir,
dos-n-ic tuile íarna tráig;

17. In his edition of the song, Ó Baoill (2009, 105) translates this final line as 'under her clamorous tide race', based on a later version of the song.

18. Edition and translation of this stanza and subsequent stanzas from Ó hAodha (1989), 311-17; §§ 1, 34 and 35.

is mé, ni frescu dom-í
tuile tar éisi aithbi.

(‘Happy the island of the great sea: flood comes to it after ebb;
as for me, I expect no flood after ebb to come to me.’)

Is súaill mennatán indíu
ara tabrainnse aithgne;
a n-í ro boí for tuile
atá uile for aithbe.

(‘Today there is scarcely an abode I would recognise;
what was in flood is all ebbing.’)

Within this context, the particular reference to the flood-tide (*lìonadh*) as the destructive force by Mairghread nighean Lachainn in her song, as well as the central part played by the flood-tide in trapping the old woman gathering shellfish in Campbell’s lore, are noteworthy. It might be suggested that Mairghread nighean Lachainn – and her song’s audience – were familiar with a version of the ninth-century poem and that this metaphor was particularly resonant for that reason. Perhaps the same can be suggested of Campbell’s lore.

As regards the place-name in Mairghread nighean Lachainn’s song and its forms in subsequent published versions of the song, there is some debate as to the precise location of its referent but good evidence to suggest that it refers to the dangerous sea of Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point. In HM, the contemporary local MS collection, a footnote pertaining specifically to the line ‘Ri nach robh iad ‘Sa Chailich’ in HM identifies it with the Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point area: ‘a poin [i.e. point] of land in Mull extremely dangerous in time of the tide filling’ (see Ó Baoill 2009, 217). However, it should be noted that a subsequent footnote, pertaining to the first line of the subsequent couplet, refers to Coire Bhreacain/Corryreckan (NM685021), a whirlpool between the islands of Diùra/Jura and Scarba to the south of Muile/Mull (Ó Baoill 2009, 217).¹⁹ The picture is confused further by later editions of the song which also identify the place as Coire Bhreacain/Corryreckan, including the version published in *Dwelly* (s.v. *caithream*; see also Ó Baoill 2009, 190–91). Underlying the confusion

19. ‘the Gulf of Coribhreacan’

in these sources is the fact that *A' Chailleach is a known alternative name for Coire Bhreacain/Corryvreckan. In 1703, Martin Martin records the following:

This boiling of the sea is not above a pistol-shot distant from the coast of Scarba Isle, where the white waves meet and spout up: they call it the Kaillach, i.e. 'an old hag'; and they say that when she puts on her kerchief, i.e. the whitest wave, it is then reckoned fatal to approach her. (*Martin*, 146)

In other lore, Coire Bhreacain/Corryvreckan is the 'tub in which the Cailleach tramps her blankets' (e.g. Grant 1925, 8; also Ó Broin 2012, at 4'10–4'50). So, in Martin Martin's lore, *the Kaillach* is a place-name whose referent is a dangerous thalassographical feature; in the lore recorded by the likes of Grant and Ó Broin, The Cailleach is the protagonist, as opposed to the eponym. Grant's lore provides the evidence to support her etymological analysis of the place-name Coire Bhreacain: that it contains G *coire* in the sense 'a cauldron' and G *breacan*, gen. *breacain* in the sense 'a plaid, a blanket', although Grant also proposes the personal name Breacan as an alternative specific (Grant 1925, 8). Whatever Coire Bhreacain's original etymology, which is beyond the remit of this article, we should note for our immediate purposes evidence for: the application of a place-name whose etymology is G *an* + G *cailleach* to turbulent water in *Martin*; and the dynamism of this place-lore pertaining to Coire Bhreacain/Corryvreckan across the sources.

Returning to the referent of the place-name in the couplet of Mairghread nighean Lachainn's song, it is very likely that Dwelly was influenced by the passage in *Martin* cited above, as Ó Baoill (2009, 190) suggests. I follow Ó Baoill (2009, 190) in taking the contemporary, local Hector Maclean MS as authoritative, in terms of locating the place in Muile/Mull, and thus take Dwelly to be in error. The most plausible location in Muile/Mull, considering the namescape and evidence of place-lore, is the Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point area. As regards the precise referent of the place in the mind of the song-maker, the overt reference to the 'tumult of the flood-tide' in the song is noteworthy. It is very plausible that the place-name recorded in Mairghread nighean Lachainn's song is used precisely of a turbulent, dangerous thalassographical feature off Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point, rather than to the point itself. In this light, and considering the evidence for conflation of G *cailleach* and G *coileach* and G *coileach* as a productive place-name element likely applied

figuratively to places associated with loud water, we might speculate at further dynamism within the Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point namescape: that *A' Chailleach, its associated namescape and lore in this part of north-west Muile/Mull derive from development of *An Coileach > *A' Chailleach as the name of a dangerous thalassographical feature off Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point. There is no known direct evidence for this development in the namescape of this part of north-west Muile/Mull but the evidence warns against us ruling it out here or elsewhere in similar namescapes featuring *G cailleach* or *G coileach*.

While we might speculate about the original name of *A' Chailleach in north-west Muile/Mull, we are better served by analysing the local namescape and its associated place-lore with a view to: refining our understanding the underlying imaginative tensions and social and cultural contexts that have shaped this namescape and others like it; and informing methodologies in place-name studies drawing on methodologies in folklore studies. The next section of this article investigates the place-lore of the Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point area through the prism of folklore studies with the aim of demonstrating that this corpus of lore provides us not only with examples of forms and functions of The Cailleach undiscussed in recent studies of this otherworld figure but refines our understanding of place-naming processes and can inform toponymic methodologies.

Ó Cruaíaoich (2003, 91) has proposed that the versions of The Cailleach figure presented to us in textual and oral sources give 'creative expression to current imaginative tensions and to the contemporary social and cultural status quo'. Ó Cruaíaoich's four categories of 'legends' relating to the non-sovereignty queen aspect of A' Chailleach Bheur²⁰ provide a useful starting point for analysis of place-lore from Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point (2003, 89):

1. Creator and dominator of landscape
2. Extraordinary facets, physique, nourishment and hygiene
3. Suggested physical eternity but shown to be finite
4. Conflict with and displacement by Christianity

Some versions of A' Chailleach Bheur in Muile/Mull and place-names associated with the figure are relatively well-known within folklore studies.

20. Ó Cruaíaoich (2003, 89) refers to the figure as '*Cailleach Bhéarra*'.

Indeed, of the sixteen texts relating to The Cailleach analysed by Ó Cruailaich (2003) from Scotland and Ireland, two are from Scotland and both of these are from Muile/Mull. The oral narrative performance of Caiphtean Dùghall MacCormaig (Captain Dugald MacCormick) of Fionnphort in Muile/Mull, recorded by Calum Iain MacIlleathain (Calum Iain Maclean) of the School of Scottish Studies in 1953 (TAD 2743), has been analysed by Ó Cruailaich (2003, 115–20) and Shaw (2004, 218–21). Dùghall MacCormaig's performance takes the listener to Loch Obha/Loch Awe and Maol Chinn Tìre/Mull of Kintyre in mainland Earra-Ghàidheal/Argyll, but the main action takes place in Muile/Mull: in An Gleann Mòr/Glen More (NM626304) in the centre of the island; in Earraid/Erraid (NM294197); and around Loch Bà, a large freshwater loch in central Muile/Mull. Shaw (2004, 218) refers to Dùghall MacCormaig's performance as 'The Mull version of *Cailleach Bheurr*' and analyses it as one of the 'legends whose function has been to entertain and at the same time explain the nature or function of things'. Ó Cruailaich (2003, 120) categorises Dùghall MacCormaig's performance among examples of '[v]ictories of a male-centred social order' within the corpus of lore relating to The Cailleach.²¹ Dùghall MacCormaig's performance is also known in the world of Gaelic-medium education, in the form of an educational resource based on the performance developed by Tobar an Dualchais and Stòrlann (Stòrlann). None of these sources refers to the namescape and lore of the corner of north-west Muile/Mull which forms the research area of this article. The evidence presented in this article demonstrates that there is more than one version of this figure from Muile/Mull. It will be argued that lore from Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point provides not only examples of place-names and place-lore which align with Ó Cruailaich's four identified categories above but allows us to identify additional motifs.

As regards his category one Cailleach-legends, Ó Cruailaich (2003, 120) notes that A' Chailleach Bheur 'personifies landscape and territory and is represented as even constituting, corporeally, the very fabric of the landscape in the identification of physical features with aspects of her body'. At Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point, this motif has been seen above in a number of sources which identify 'the figure of the old woman' in the crag (Campbell 1895, 66–7;

21. Ó Cruailaich (2003, 113–15) categorises the other oral narrative performance he cites from Muile/Mull, which also centres around Loch Bà, in the same way: as an example of '[v]ictories of a male-centred social order'.

see also MacLean 1923, 171; MacQuarrie 1982, 9; pers. comm. Reay Whyte). In Ó Cruailaoich's category-one stories, '[t]he negative, destructive aspect of the hag-goddess is attested to in widespread legends regarding the dangers to humans and to human well-being that are associated with travel through certain landscapes'. Achlais na Caillich in north-west Muile/Mull is presented too as a dangerous place in some of its associated lore; it is in Achlais na Caillich that the old woman was gathering shell-fish before her demise in Campbell's published lore (1895, 66; also MacLean 1923, 171). We should note that the armpit is described as 'not the armpit of a smooth woman' (Campbell 1895, 66). It is thus very likely to have been imagined by at least some place-name users as a physical representation of the 'armpit' of The Cailleach figure in the lore. The alignment with Ó Cruailaoich's category-one stories is clear. As we have also seen above, there is evidence for the existing name *A' Chailleach applying to the dangerous waters around Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point. This is certainly also evident in Martin's description of *A' Chailleach, the alternative name for Coire Bhreacain/Corryvreckan discussed above. Within both of these namescapes, the place-name *A' Chailleach is likely to have functioned as a signpost of danger to humans and human well-being among some users of the place-names. Black (2019, viii) refers to other stories from the corpus of Scottish lore from the Gaelic otherworld peopled by witches such as The Cailleach which developed for practical purposes such as 'keeping children safe'. In some namescapes, the place-name *A' Chailleach can therefore be described as shorthand for a local destructive, uncontrollable force.

The reference to shell-fish in the lore recorded by Campbell and MacLean above aligns with a motif identified by Ó Cruailaoich in his category-two tales. Ó Cruailaoich (2003, 90) notes that '[in] south-western coastal regions [of Ireland], legend presents her [*Cailleach Bhéarra*] as subsisting on a marine diet ... which she is able to harvest over a huge stretch of terrain'. The lore published by Campbell (1895, 67) also aligns with Ó Cruailaoich's category-two tales and the 'gigantic presence' of The Cailleach in lore (Ó Cruailaoich 2003, 90) in that it attributes an extraordinary facet to The Cailleach of Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point: specifically, a snort or sneeze which can be heard around seven miles to the west on the island of Colla/Coll (see also G.[Grant] 1911, 131; Grant 1925, 8).

We may discuss Ó Cruailaoich's category-three and category-four tales simultaneously. The Cailleach of Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point does not have suggested physical eternity in the lore presented above, as such, but is shown

to be finite and her conflict with Christianity is manifest in much of the published lore, e.g. Campbell (1895, 66–7):

When at the top, and almost out of danger, she said ‘I am safe now, in spite of God and men’ (*Tha mi tearuinte nis ge b’ oil le Dia ’s le daoine*). She was converted into a stone forming part of the rock distinctly to be seen from the highest point of *Cailleach*.

Petrification is among the motifs specifically cited by Ó Cruailaoich (2003, 90) in his category-four tales. The *Cailleach*, whose lack of faith is manifest in the quote attributed to her in the passage quoted from Campbell above, is ousted by the Christian male divinity, to borrow Ó Cruailaoich’s phrase (2003, 90). The petrification of The *Cailleach* in this lore is a biblical reference that the contemporary population of the area would likely have recognised; it is a localised version of the conversion of Lot’s wife into a pillar of salt in the Old Testament (Genesis 19: 26). What Campbell presents us with is a localised version of the biblical tale which represents a creative, Christian response to a pre-existing namescape charged with associations with The *Cailleach*. It is worth briefly stepping aside to draw comparisons between the petrification motif presented in Campbell’s lore and the motif as it is presented elsewhere in place-names and place-lore with a view to refining our understanding of place-names and place-naming within and outwith a Gaelic milieu.

A particularly relevant comparison from a Scots context is place-lore associated with the place-names Carlin and Daughter from the Lomonds in Kinross-shire. As we have seen, ‘carlin’ is one term used to define G *cailleach* (*Dwelly*). These Kinross-shire place-names are specifically associated in lore with Carlin Maggie and her daughter, who are said to have been turned into two stone pillars of basalt by the Deil (‘Devil’) (*PNKNR*, 506). Within the context of A’ Chailleach Bheur, Grant (1925, 8–9) draws attention to the petrification motif in lore about nine witches ‘as told by a Saxon-Hungarian woman whom I met in Roumania’. The nine witches are said to be physically represented on the top of ‘the mountain of Silash in Temesvar’.²² In the absence of evidence, we do not know if petrification of The *Cailleach* figure existed in pre-Christian lore in

22. The place Grant refers to as *Temesvar* is now generally known by its Romanian name Timișoara. It lies in the west of Romania.

north-west Muile/Mull but comparative evidence tells us that we should not rule this out.

In relation to the Old Testament-tale of the conversion of Lot's wife into a pillar of salt, there are comparisons to be made in and furth of Muile/Mull which have implications for our understanding of the creative, Christian response to a pre-existing namescape identified in the area of Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point. Firstly, as Jacobs (1902, 187) points out within the context of Lot's Wife, a place-name applied to a feature of Mount Sodom in Israel, the biblical story about Lot's wife 'bears marks of popular origin, and is regarded by critics and travelers as a folk-legend intended to explain some pillar of crystallized rock-salt resembling the female human form'. These discourses should be considered in future analysis of the name-type Lot's Wife, which refers to rocky, coastal features in Kirkcudbrightshire (NX824487; OSNB KCB OS1/20/156/35/2; also NX909557; OSNB KCB OS1/20/138/55/2) and in Marsden Bay in north-east England (NZ400649; Geograph, 'Lot's Wife'); and to an inland stone in Roxburghshire (NT843188; OSNB ROX OS1/29/30/106/1). In Muile/Mull, there is the place-name Cailleach Eonain or Cailleach Eamhnain which, on the basis of the known evidence, refers to a feature of the rocky coastline of west Muile/Mull around six miles SSE of Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point. It is unrecorded in OS sources but recorded at NM382451 by Maclean (1997, 126, 136) in a section entitled 'Unmapped Names'.²³ In relation to the name's specific element, Maclean (1997, 126) discusses *G eanach* 'dandruff' but notes that this etymology 'is unlikely even if it does sound possible'. A more plausible specific is the personal name Adhamhnan, earlier Adomnán, of which *-eonan* and *-eonain* are known reflexes in place-names and personal names (*CPNS*, 270–1; Butter 2007, i 131–2, ii 246–7; Black 1946, 305). The evidence is scanty but it is tempting, on the basis of these forms, to identify the referent of the specific in Cailleach Eonain or Cailleach Eamhnain as St Adhamhnan of Ì/Iona and to speculate that there associated place-lore existed here involving the petrification of The Cailleach by this local saint.

Returning to the place-lore of Rubha na Caillich published by Campbell, it is, therefore, likely to be best understood as the product of 'imaginative tension' between native pre-Christian belief and Christian ideology and motif, to apply Ó Cruailaoich's analysis in a local context (Ó Cruailaoich 2003, 87). This is

23. Maclean does not cite his source.

nowhere better exemplified than in the final passage of Campbell's published lore (Campbell 1895, 67):

On one occasion, the writer being himself ensconced under the side deck of a smack, then plying to the island, heard a Tíree boatman, who was conversing with a minister from the south of Argyleshire, and had no fancy for the overly pious talk of the too-zealous stranger, remarking that there was an old woman here and when she gave a snort, she could be heard over in Coll. [*'Tha Cailleach an so 's trà nì i sreothart cluinneadh iad'an Cola i.'*] The minister said that that was most extraordinary, and as it now began to rain the boatman began to exhort him to go below, and professed much regard for the minister's health. At last he got rid of him.

There is evidence here that imaginative tension is heightened in namescapes and place-lore associated with The Cailleach on account of the prevalence and power of this autonomous, female, pagan, otherworld figure; in other words, it may be that the most powerful male, Christian figures were invoked to combat The Cailleach: God in Campbell's published lore about Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point; and, perhaps, St Adhamhnan in place-lore associated with Cailleach Eonain/Cailleach Eamhnain. In the Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point namescape, it is worth noting that Christ is the dedicatee in Cill Chrìost/Cillchrìosd (NM373535), the name of a settlement recorded alongside Caliach in the earliest known fiscal sources.²⁴ This place-name's etymology is *G cill(e)* 'a church; a chapel; a burial-ground' + *pn Crìost*, gen. Chrìost 'Christ'. The burial-ground and chapel for which the place-name provides evidence lies 100m SE of the modern house at Cill Chrìost/Cillchrìosd which lies just over a mile ENE of the ruined settlement of Caliach (see also Canmore ID 21828). The archaeological landscape includes a standing stone (NM377534; Canmore ID 21851) and a possible cup-marked stone (NGR NM376534; Canmore ID 21855). Future research might consider this evidence from Muile/Mull in investigating tension elsewhere in local namescapes between overtly Christian lore and names and lore associated with versions of The Cailleach and other otherworld figures.

To summarise this section of the article, the place-lore from Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point exemplifies many aspects of lore associated with The

24. It is Gilzacrest in 1494 in *RMS* ii no. 2329.

Cailleach identified in previous studies of this otherworld figure. In the published lore of Campbell, we have evidence of the skilful reworking and Christianisation of the local namescape and its associated place-lore in the demise and petrification of the 'old woman' by God, specifically. In the same published place-lore and in other sources, including current oral lore, we can also identify numerous pre-Christian motifs identified in lore associated with The Cailleach furth of this north-west corner of Muile/Mull: a female figure constituting the very fabric of the landscape; use of place-names and place-lore to signpost uncontrollable, destructive forces posing danger to humans; a female figure of gigantic presence in the environment; a female figure subsisting on a marine diet; petrification. The creative tension between pre-Christian beliefs and Christian ideology is exemplified in the passage in Campbell's published lore describing the tension between a Tíree boatman and the overly-zealous minister from south Argyll.

These motifs align with those identified by Ó Cruailaich in the four categories above but the evidence from Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point adds another motif to this discussion, as well as adding a place-name unrecorded in OS sources to this *cailleach*-namescape and providing linguistic evidence for a local dialectal variant of *G dròbh* 'a drove'. On the basis of the known evidence, the name is best presented as *Uamh Bhuaile na Drògh*. It is recorded as *Uamh Bhuaile nan Drogh* by Campbell (1895, 66). Grant (1911, 131) records the similar form *Uamh Bhuaile-nan-Drògh* but also refers to the cave as *Buaile nan drògh* (Grant 1925, 8). Campbell (1895, 66) provides a useful description of the place but neither of his etymological suggestions regarding the name's final element is likely:

To the south of the Point there is a cave, which becomes accessible only when the tide has half fallen. Its Gaelic name is *Uamh Bhuaile nan Drogh*. Wild pigeons tenant it, and are seen emerging when the tide has fallen. The cooing sound of the birds heard under water seems to have led to the name, which means, the Cave of the Cattle-fold of the fairies, and it is noticeable that the word *Drogh* denotes that it first received its name from a Teutonic source, very possibly from the race that came ultimately to tenant the Orkney islands. It is said, however, that Dutchmen possessed the fisheries on the west coast of Scotland, and it has been suggested that the word *Drogh* is from Drag-net, which they kept in the cave.

Despite the fact that Campbell discusses this name within the same passage as Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point and Achlais na Caillich, he does not make an explicit or direct connection between the cave and The Cailleach, instead linking the name to ‘the fairies’.²⁵ Grant, however, does make this association:

An uair a thigeadh an t-àm gus na gabhair a bhleoghan, ruitheadh iad 'n an treudan a stigh do Uamh Bhuaile-nan-Drògh, aig Rudha na Caillich. B'e 'n sealladh am faicinn, 'n an sreudan caoir-gheal, agus gaoir an t-sruth-bhleoghain ag éirigh gus na nèamhan. (G.[Grant] 1911, 131)

(When the time would come to milk the goats, they would run in their herds into *Uamh Bhuaile-nan-Drògh*, at *Rudha na Caillich*. That was the sight: to see them, in their incandescent herds, with the hissing sound of the milking-lilt rising to the heavens.)²⁶

The milking-fold of the Cailleach's sheep and goats – Buaile nan drògh – is a cave at Cailleach Point, that stormiest of headlands on the coast of Mull (Grant 1925, 8).



Fig. 5 Looking E at the mouth of Uamh Bhuaile nan Drògh slightly left of centre.
Photograph: Alasdair C. Whyte

25. For discussion of the three Gaelic otherworlds, peopled respectively by Fairies, spirits and witches, see Black (2019, vii *et passim*). Black cogently argues that The Cailleach belongs to the latter.

26. The translation is my own. For use of *gaoir* for the continuous, hissing noise of sea-waves, see DASG FA (s.v. *gaoir-thonn*).



Fig. 6 Looking S from Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point towards the cliffs above Uamh Bhuaile nan Drògh in the middle distance. Photograph: Alasdair C. Whyte

On the basis of the place-name's known forms and associated lore, its generic is *G uamh* 'a cave'. The name is unrecorded in OS sources although 'Cave' is marked on the 2015 Explorer map at NM349532 and this is the grid reference attached to the name by Maclean (1997, 117, 156–57; see also Map 2 and Fig. 5 above). Grant does not discuss the precise etymology of the final element in the underlying existing name *Buaile nan Drògh* but dialectal evidence supports identification of it as *G drògh*. *G drògh* is proposed here as a variant of *dròbh* which can be defined primarily as 'a drove' (*MacEachainn* s.v. *dròbh*). *G dròbh* is understood as a loan-word from Eng. *drove* 'a number of beasts, as oxen, sheep, etc., driven in a body; a herd, flock' (OED s.v. *drove*, n.; *Macbain* s.v. *dròbh*). It should be noted that *G drògh* is proposed in this name, albeit tentatively and imprecisely, by Maclean (1997, 157) who presents the following analysis:

Gaelic *Drògh* or *Dròbh* means 'a drove of cattle' or 'a market'. Above the cliff in which the cave is situated is a large enclosed flat area which could have been used as a cattlemarket – somewhat isolated it is true – but it is at least possible that the cave was named 'the enclosure of the droves of cattle' from this area rather than from holding fishing lines in such an inaccessible place.

Maclean's proposal of *drògh* as a local variant of *dròbh* is sound. However, engagement with other place-lore, late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-

century Gaelic short stories and song from the area, and dialectal evidence can significantly refine Maclean's etymological analysis of the place-name.

Firstly, application of G *dròbh* as 'a market' is recorded in Leòdhas/Lewis: in *Dwelly* (s.v. *dròbh*) and in the phrase 'Là na Dròbh' ('the day of the market'), which is recorded in DASG FA (s.v. *dròbh*). Furth of Leòdhas/Lewis, however, the term is typically used of cattle but it is also used of other animals and people (DASG FA s.v. *dròbh*). In DASG FA, a total of five instances are recorded: on three occasions it is defined as 'a herd (or collection) of cattle';²⁷ it is once used of people in the phrase 'Gilleán a bhaile dol dhachaidh nan dròbhan' ('the lads of the township going home in their droves')²⁸; and once as 'flock (of sheep)'.²⁹

Within a Muile/Mull context, there are seven instances of the term in John MacFadyen's late-nineteenth-century collection of original songs, poems and readings entitled *An t-Eileanach*: on six occasions in the short story 'Tro'd nam ban mu'n sgarbh', where its use is exemplified in the phrase 'drobh mòr cruaidh' ('a great drove of cattle'; MacFadyen 1890, 261).³⁰ Its application by MacFadyen can also be seen in the following passage (1890, 236–37): 'Bha Eachann a' togail mòran treud, agus le chuid treud fhéin, agus na bha e ceannach feadh na dùthcha cha mhor dhrobh a ruigeadh an Eaglais Bhreac, a b' ainmeala na drobh Dhruim a' Challtainn' ('Eachann was building up a large herd, and with his own herd, along with that which he was purchasing around the country, there was hardly a drove that would arrive in Falkirk as famous as the drove of Druim a' Challtainn').³¹ In MacFadyen's poem 'Air an Fhéill' (1890, 169), the application is slightly ambiguous, given that the setting is a *fèill* 'a festival, a market' but the context suggests that *dròbh* is very likely in this instance to be used synonymously with *sprèidh* 'cattle'. As we have seen, however, non-cattle-specific use of *dròbh* is frequently attested and, in another short story from an early-twentieth-century writer from Muile/Mull, Iain MacCormaic (John

27 In Tìree, Barra and Gairloch.

28 D. R. Morrison (D.R. Moireasdan), Na Hearadh, Scalpaigh (Harris, Scalpay).

29 Archie Dan Maclellan, Broadcove, Cape Breton, in the Field Notebooks of Seosamh Watson.

30 Three of the instances in the first edition of *An t-Eileanach* do not include a length-mark on the vowel but the other four instances do. *Dròbh* is the preferred form, on the basis of this evidence and modern orthography (LearnGaelic s.v. *dròbh*).

31 The translation is my own.

MacCormick), the term is used of a pack of dogs: the phrase is ‘dròbh abhagan’ which is probably best translated as ‘a drove of terriers’ (MacCormaic 1911, 108).

To summarise this evidence, in Muile/Mull, G *dròbh* is probably best defined as ‘a drove, a herd, a group of animals’. More generally, G *dròbh* frequently refers to cattle and, perhaps similarly to the English term *drove*, its application to other animals and people is transferred from an original application to cattle. In Leòdhas/Lewis, application as ‘a market’ is known.

It will be noted that all of the above instances are of the standard form of the term: *dròbh*. There is no known use of *drògh* as a variant of *dròbh* in sources from Muile/Mull but *drògh* is recorded as a variant of *dròbh* in *Dwelly*. Moreover, there is dialectal evidence for realisation of final broad *bh* as voiced velar fricative /ɣ/ in north-west Muile/Mull in the term *dubh* ‘black’: [dũɣ] (SGDS, §354, 355, point 83). On the basis of this linguistic evidence, identification of the final element in the existing name Buaile nan Drògh as G *drògh*, a variant of G *dròbh*, is very likely.

As regards the precise referent of *drògh* in the place-name Uamh Bhuaile nan Drògh and the contribution of the lore of this place to analysis of motifs in *cailleach*-lore, it is worth noting that Ó Cruaíoch (2003) does not specifically discuss an association between A’ Chailleach Bheur and herds of goats and sheep. However, this is a motif clearly identifiable in the place-lore of Uamh Bhuaile nan Drògh. At a basic level, the name Buaile nan Drògh can be translated as ‘(the) (milking-)fold of the droves’. It may have referred to a fold for actual livestock on the cliffs above the cave. Uamh Bhuaile nan Drògh lies only around 600m west of the ruined township of Caliach and 750m south-west of the modern working livestock farm of Caliach. Though seemingly remote in a contemporary context, the predominant soils here are the mineral, basalt-derived, largely freely-drained, agriculturally-important brown earths of the Darleith Association (SC 3.2.1; Soil mapping unit 158: see SIFSS and *SLCFA*, 60). Deeper soils of this type are frequently cultivated and even ground with shallower soils not suitable for agricultural improvement are of high grazing value. The local landscape is lined with the remains of enclosures. The coastal topography above Uamh Bhuaile nan Drògh is, in fact, remarkable for its defined headland (NM349532) which widens to the west and north-west from a narrow point defined by two sea-inlets: a headland which lends itself to the gathering of livestock. There is also clear evidence for cultivation on the headland. Application of the place-name Buaile nan Drògh to a fold for actual

livestock, as opposed to supernatural livestock, on the cliffs above the cave is very plausible.

However, Grant's sensuous descriptions in Gaelic and English reveal the imaginative dimension of Uamh Bhuaile nan Drògh and its lore. Grant (1925, 4) presents these descriptions as creative expressions and she very likely has Uamh Bhuaile nan Drògh specifically in mind in the following passage in her English-language piece on The Cailleach:

'The Cailleach is milking her goats to-night; don't you hear the milking-lilt?' (Sruth-bleoghan.) This when the hurricane was at its height, and the thunder of the billow rose in unison with the voice of the winds; and foam-crested waves rolled into cove, and cave, and creek around the shore.³²

Grant's accompanying photograph of a wave breaking on sea rocks captioned 'One of Cailleach Bheur's Flocks rushing into the Milking Fold' indicates that, in her mind, *drògh* is used figuratively in this name of the whites of the waves off the coast of Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point (Grant 1925, 4, 5). We might compare use of the phrase *white horses* in English. Grant, then, is drawing figurative comparison between the whites of the waves around Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point, particularly in rough seas, and the whites of A' Chailleach Bheur's herds; the sound of these waves inspires her comparison with the gushing sound created by the milking of the goats. The implication is that local users of the place-names Buaile nan Drògh and Uamh Bhuaile nan Drògh did the same and that they spoke of similar things in their place-lore and in their oral narrative performances. For others, the place-name perhaps conjured up images of supernatural goats and sheep being herded into the cave or fold. As we have seen, in this dynamic namescape, we should not rule out that the place-name Buaile nan Drògh was applied by some to a fold for actual livestock. While Ó Cruaíoch (2003) does not include discussion of this motif of herds of goats and sheep in *cailleach*-tales, we should note, as Eleanor Hull (1927, 251) does, that 'shaggy goats' are frequently among The Cailleach's attendant animals in lore. The place-lore of Uamh Bhuaile nan Drògh refines

32 For use of *gaoir* for the continuous, hissing noise of sea-waves, see DASG FA (s.v. *gaoir-thonn*).

our understanding of this motif and might be compared to place-lore elsewhere.

PLACE-LORE AND PLACE-NAMES: A NEW METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This article argues that analysis of the known lore for any given place, in its various published and unpublished forms across relevant languages, is critical for understanding local namescapes across time. In many cases, this interdisciplinary approach will reveal dynamism in namescapes unattested in other sources and, moreover, reveal the factors behind this dynamism. It will allow us to better understand the crucial human, creative element in the place-naming process. This is the same creative need that lies behind some of the melodic and lyrical variance we hear and see in Gaelic song in oral and published forms. The Muile/Mull song-maker Mairghread nighean Lachainn's song to Sir Eachann MacIllEathain, versions of which provide us with important historical forms of the proposed existing name *A' Chailleach in the area of study in this article, is sung to more than one melody (e.g. cf. TAD 64944 and TAD 108699) and there is marked variance in the lyrics of the couplet containing the place-name *A' Chailleach across known versions, as can be seen in the Appendix below.

The methodological approach adopted in this article has significant potential to contribute, in turn, to folklore studies by way of adding to the corpus of lore for any given area and by way of identifying motifs. This article analyses just one small corner of north-west Muile/Mull but its namescape exemplifies the creative, human element in place-naming and how this feeds fluidity and dynamism within namescapes. When discussing versions of The Cailleach which attest the figure's extraordinary facets, Ó Cruailaich (2003, 90) writes that 'she is not to be fixed or confined in identification with any single location, but is a shifting, dynamic, vital force within and across the physical landscape'. Ó Cruailaich is specifically referring to the otherworld figure here but terms such as 'shifting' and 'dynamic' are equally applicable to the namescape. As Meek (1998, 167) has suggested, in his study of '*Fian*-lore', of place-names in the Gaelic ballads, place-names are 'movable and adaptable' in lore and song. Namescapes associated with The Cailleach or containing *G cailleach* may, perhaps, be more susceptible to reimaginings and reinterpretations, given the complex origins of the figure and potential conflation with *G coileach* in some names, but changing linguistic, social, cultural and political environments, as well as the often-underestimated

influence of the human creative imagination, ensure widespread dynamism across namespaces.

The methodology employed in this article has also been crucial to increasing our understanding of the place-name element *cailleach*. As we have seen, anthropological, figurative, religious, supernatural and topographical applications of the element *cailleach* have been identified in previous studies, in the senses ‘nun; river hag’ (CPNS, 140, 267, 302, 427) and ‘old woman; rock’ (Taylor 2005, 15). However, these definitions do not identify the application of this element to thalassographical features. In light of this, G *cailleach* is perhaps best defined in Scottish place-names thus: ‘old woman; nun; supernatural figure; rock, crag (figurative); turbulent water (figurative)’. Future toponymic studies employing a similar methodology are required in order for this definition of G *cailleach* to be further refined and for potential conflation with G *coileach* to be identified. However, it is hoped that the analysis presented here of place-names and place-lore within the context of wider studies of The Cailleach figure in folklore will assist place-name researchers furth of Muile/Mull in analysis of similar names. This has implications not only for analysis of G *cailleach* in place-names but for other elements with potential and known otherworld associations within a Gaelic-language context in Scotland and within the context of other languages elsewhere. Within a local linguistic context, the methodology employed here has, furthermore, identified a local dialectal form productive in local place-names. Engagement with place-lore has been crucial in analysing the form and precise application of G *drògh*, demonstrated here to be a dialectal variant of G *dròbh*. Engagement with place-lore has also provided evidence of the application of G *achlais* to a coastal feature.

We would do well, in Scottish place-name studies, to refer more frequently to place-lore. There are clearly challenges relating to engagement with lore across relevant languages but this article demonstrates the benefits of this approach. Dynamic namespaces present challenges too in relation to presenting an authoritative definition of any given place-name and identifying the referent of any given place-name element: a tenet of place-name studies. In many cases, a place-name is a microcosm of related place-lore. By combining analysis of place-names and place-lore in this corner of north-west Muile/Mull, this article argues that dynamism and variance in the namespace should be expected. For any given place, we should expect more than one associated name and more than one version of associated lore to exist and allow for the

creative processes which feed this in place-name studies. As humans and place-namers, we have an inherent desire to imagine and reimagine our surroundings time and time again: as individuals and within wider communities. The challenge for toponymists is that, in some cases, we are now left with just one version of events in lore; in other cases, we are left with just the microcosm itself; and in some cases, we are left without even the microcosm: lost before it was recorded. Recently, within a local context in north-west Muile/Mull, depopulation, immigration, language shift and associated loss of local heritage are also factors in the dynamism visible in our sources for local place-names and place-lore. The local story has wider relevance. The most recent age of the Anthropocene has been dominated by globalisation and the abandonment of local culture for global culture by people across the world. Place-name studies and place-name researchers can do much to increase engagement with and understanding of the dynamism of local namescapes and the wide-ranging sources for place-names, as well as promoting and safeguarding local heritage. It may be that place-name researchers have to adopt a more flexible approach to presenting these definitions to allow better understanding of the fluidity of namescapes; analyses of individual place-names will certainly benefit from presenting synchronic and diachronic place-lore. Any given place-name could have meant different things to different people across time. Any given place-name could have meant different things to any given individual across time or even at the same time. In short, local place-names and place-lore are products of human creativity and human responses to their perceived natural and supernatural environments across time. For these reasons, place-name studies have profound local and global relevance.

APPENDIX: A SURVEY OF THE PLACE-NAMES DISCUSSED ABOVE IN THE RUBHA NA CAILLICH/CALIACH POINT AREA

A' CHAILLEACH * KKE W NM346544 2 X 15m

? 'Sa *Chaillich* c.1750 × c.1768 HM, 87 [dative.: 'in *A' Chailleach'; in the couplet 'Ri nach robh iad 'Sa Chailich / Fudh Chaiream an lionaich' ('Lord, that they [the Lowlanders] were in *A' Chailleach under the tumult of the flood-tide')]

? sa *chaillich* 1813 *Mac-an-Tuairneir*, 20 [dative; in the couplet 'S truagh nach robh iad 'sa chaillich / Fo chaithream a lionaidh' ('A pity they were not in *A' Chailleach under her tumultuous flood-tide')]

? 's a *Chaillich* 1821 *RM*, 124 ['S truagh nach robh iad 's a Chaillich, / Fo chaithrean a lionaidh.']

? anns a' *Chaillich* 1860 *FB*, 44 ['Nach robh sibh anns a' Chaillich / Fo chaithream an lionadh' ('[A pity] you were not in *A' Chailleach under the tumult of the flood-tide')]

? 'sa *Chaillich* 1892 *GB2*, 105 ["Rìgh, nach robh iad 'sa Chaillich / Fo ard chaithrim an lionidh.']

? 'sa *Chaillich* 1898 *BL*, 206 ["Rìgh, nach robh iad 'sa Chaillich / Fo ard chaithrim an lionaidh']

? anns a' *Chaillich* 1901 × 1911 *Dwelly* [s.v. *caithream*; Dwelly cites *FB*, above]

G *an* + G *cailleach* (f).

'The cailleach (i.e. old woman)'.

Full analysis of this name and its referents is presented in the article above. This reconstructed name is proposed to refer precisely in the historical forms presented here to a dangerous thalassographical feature off the coast of Rubha na Caillich/Caliach Point. The grid reference attached to the headname in this entry refers to that feature.

ACHLAIS NA CAILLICH KKE C NM350542 1 X 0m

Achlais na Caillich 1895 Campbell, 66

Achlais na Caillich 1923 MacLean, 171

Achlais na Caillich 1997 Maclean, 93, 123

G *achlais* + en *A' Chailleach or G *achlais* + G *an* + G *cailleach* (f), gen. *caillich*(e).
'(The) Armpit at *A' Chailleach' or '(the) armpit of the cailleach'.

ALLT NA CAILLICH KKE W NM355538 1 374 0m

Allt na Caillich OSNB ARG OS1/2/69/39/2

Allt na Caillich 1877 × 1882 OS 6 inch 1st edn 51

G *allt* + en *A' Chailleach or G *allt* + G *an* + G *cailleach* (f), gen. *caillich*(e).

‘(The) Burn at *A' Chailleach’ or ‘(the) burn of the cailleach’.

BUAILE NAN DRÒGH KKE C NM349532 1 X 0m

Buaile nan drògh 1925 Grant, 8

G *buaile* + G *an* + G *drògh*, var. *dròbh*, gen. pl. *drògh*.

‘(The) (Milking-)Fold of the droves’.

CALIACH KKE S NM355536 1 374 15m

Calzoch 1496 RMS ii no. 2329 [pennyland; refers to ruined settlement at NM356532; see also *ALI* App. 50 226-27 and *OPS* ii.i 320]

pencalich 1509 NRS E38/339 [16s 8d; printed as *Pentalich* in *ER* xiii 214]

Challich 1510 RMS ii no. 3440 [pennyland; see also *OPS* ii.i 320-21]

Calioch 1540 RMS iii no. 2065 [pennyland; see also *OPS* ii.i 321]

Kaillach 1654 Blaeu (Pont) Mula [settlement-name]

Kallach 1750 Dorret [settlement-name]

Callich 1801 Langlands [settlement-name]

Callich 1807 Arrowsmith [settlement-name]

Caillich 1824 Thomson [settlement-name]

Caliach 1868 × 1878 OSNB ARG OS1/2/69/36/3 [‘Ruins of houses situated about half a mile southward from “Ling”. The property of J.M. McKenzie Esquire “Calgary Cast[le]” The parish of Kilninian and Kilmore.’]

Caliach 1877 × 1882 OS 6 inch 1st edn 51 [refers to ruined settlement at NM356532]

Caliach 1897 × 1900 OS 6 inch 2nd edn 51 [refers to ruined settlement at NM356532]

en *A' Chailleach.

PORT NA CAILLICH KKE C NM354540 1 374 0m

Port na Caillich OSNB ARG OS1/2/69/39/1

Port na Caillich 1877 × 1882 OS 6 inch 1st edn 51

G *port* + en *A' Chailleach or G *port* + G *an* + G *cailleach* (f), gen. *caillich*(e).
 '(The) Port at *A' Chailleach' or '(the) port of the cailleach'.

RUBHA NA CAILLICH/CALIACH POINT KKE R NM347543 1 374 7m

Row na Kaillaich 1654 Blaeu (Pont) Mula

Row na Killich 1750 Dorret

Callich Pt. [Point] 1801 Langlands

Callich Pt. [Point] 1807 Arrowsmith

Caillich Point 1824 Thomson

Rutha na cailliche 1840 *Cuairtear nan Gleann* i 35 [translated as 'Old Wife's Point'; *rutha* is a non-standardised form of G *rubha*]

Caliach Point 1868 × 1878 OSNB ARG OS1/2/69/39/2

Caliach Point 1877 × 1882 OS 6 inch 1st edn 51

Cailleach Point, or *The Old Wife's Headland* 1895 Campbell, 65

Rudha na Caillich 1911 G.[Grant], 131 [*rudha* is a non-standardised form of G *rubha*]

Cailleach 1923 MacCormick, 16 [in the phrase 'The headland of Cailleach']

Cailleach Point, or *The Old Wife's Headland* 1923 MacLean, 171

Cailleach Point 1925 Grant, 8, 9

Caliach Point 1982 MacQuarrie, 9

G *rubha* + en *A' Chailleach or G *rubha* + G *an* + G *cailleach* (f), gen. *caillich*(e).
 '(The) Point at *A' Chailleach' or '(the) point of the cailleach'.

UAMH BHUAILE NAN DRÒGH KKE C NM349532 1 X om

Uamh Bhuaile nan Drogh 1895 Campbell, 66

Uamh Bhuaile-nan-Drògh 1911 G.[Grant], 131

Buaile nan drògh 1925 Grant, 8

Uamh Bhuaile nan Drogh 1997 Maclean, 117, 156–57

G *uamh* + en Buaile nan Drògh.
 '(The) Cave at Buaile nan Drògh'.

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